

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN**

RAYMOND J. BERGERON DAVILA,

Plaintiff,

v.

C.O. HARRIOT,

Defendant.

Case No. 18-CV-1444-JPS

**ORDER**

Plaintiff Raymond J. Bergeron Davila proceeds in this matter *pro se*. He filed a complaint alleging that Defendant violated his constitutional rights. (Docket #1). This matter comes before the court on Plaintiff's petition to proceed without prepayment of the filing fee (*in forma pauperis*). (Docket #5). Due to Plaintiff's indigence, the Court waived payment of an initial partial filing fee in his case. (Docket #7). The Court proceeds to screen the complaint.

The court shall screen complaints brought by prisoners seeking relief against a governmental entity or an officer or employee of a governmental entity. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(a). The court must dismiss a complaint or portion thereof if the prisoner has raised claims that are legally "frivolous or malicious," that fail to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or that seek monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. *Id.* § 1915A(b).

A claim is legally frivolous when it lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 31 (1992); *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989); *Hutchinson ex rel. Baker v. Spink*, 126 F.3d 895, 900 (7th Cir. 1997). The court may, therefore, dismiss a claim as frivolous where

it is based on an indisputably meritless legal theory or where the factual contentions are clearly baseless. *Neitzke*, 490 U.S. at 327. “Malicious,” although sometimes treated as a synonym for “frivolous,” “is more usefully construed as intended to harass.” *Lindell v. McCallum*, 352 F.3d 1107, 1109–10 (7th Cir. 2003) (citations omitted).

To state a cognizable claim under the federal notice pleading system, the plaintiff is required to provide a “short and plain statement of the claim showing that [he] is entitled to relief[.]” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). It is not necessary for the plaintiff to plead specific facts and his statement need only “give the defendant fair notice of what the . . . claim is and the grounds upon which it rests.” *Bell Atl. Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007) (quoting *Conley v. Gibson*, 355 U.S. 41, 47 (1957)). However, a complaint that offers mere “labels and conclusions” or a “formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555). To state a claim, a complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, “that is plausible on its face.” *Id.* (quoting *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 570). “A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Id.* (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556). The complaint’s allegations “must be enough to raise a right to relief above the speculative level.” *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555 (citation omitted).

In considering whether a complaint states a claim, courts should follow the principles set forth in *Twombly* by first, “identifying pleadings that, because they are no more than conclusions, are not entitled to the assumption of truth.” *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 679. Legal conclusions must be supported by factual allegations. *Id.* If there are well-pleaded factual

allegations, the court must, second, “assume their veracity and then determine whether they plausibly give rise to an entitlement to relief.” *Id.*

To state a claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. Section 1983, a plaintiff must allege that: 1) he was deprived of a right secured by the Constitution or laws of the United States; and 2) the deprivation was visited upon him by a person or persons acting under color of state law. *Buchanan-Moore v. County of Milwaukee*, 570 F.3d 824, 827 (7th Cir. 2009) (citing *Kramer v. Vill. of N. Fond du Lac*, 384 F.3d 856, 861 (7th Cir. 2004)); see also *Gomez v. Toledo*, 446 U.S. 635, 640 (1980). The court is obliged to give the plaintiff’s *pro se* allegations, “however inartfully pleaded,” a liberal construction. See *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007) (quoting *Estelle v. Gamble*, 429 U.S. 97, 106 (1976)).

Plaintiff alleges that on July 7, 2018, while he was housed at Green Bay Correctional Institution, he was strapped into a restraint chair because he refused to spit out a rock he had hidden in his mouth. (Docket #1 at 2). Plaintiff says Defendant, a correctional officer, was assigned to watch Plaintiff from outside the cell door. *Id.* at 3. After the two “exchanged words,” Defendant became “upset” and sprayed Plaintiff with pepper spray. *Id.* Plaintiff claims that this caused him great pain. *Id.* He later spit out the rock. *Id.* at 4. Plaintiff alleges that he was not engaging in any self-harming activities while in the chair and did not pose a threat to anyone. *Id.* at 4–5.

The Eighth Amendment prohibits the “unnecessary and wanton infliction of pain” on prisoners. *Outlaw v. Newkirk*, 259 F.3d 833, 837 (7th Cir. 2001). When a correctional officer is accused of using excessive force, the core inquiry is “whether force was applied in a good-faith effort to maintain or restore discipline, or maliciously and sadistically to cause

harm.” *Hudson v. McMillian*, 503 U.S. 1, 7 (1992); *Santiago v. Walls*, 599 F.3d 749, 757 (7th Cir. 2010). Several factors are relevant to this determination, including the need for force, the amount applied, the threat the officer reasonably perceived, the effort made to temper the severity of the force used, and the extent of the injury caused to the prisoner. *Hudson*, 503 U.S. at 7; *Fillmore v. Page*, 358 F.3d 496, 504 (7th Cir. 2004). Taking Plaintiff’s allegations as true, Defendant’s conduct could be viewed as excessive force. Whether the evidence bears this out must be left for another day. For now, Plaintiff has stated a claim for violation of his Eighth Amendment rights.

Therefore, the Court finds that Plaintiff may proceed on the following claim pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b): The use of excessive force against Plaintiff, in violation of the Eighth Amendment, by Defendant on July 7, 2018.

Accordingly,

**IT IS ORDERED** that Plaintiff’s motion for leave to proceed without prepayment of the filing fee (*in forma pauperis*) (Docket #5) be and the same is hereby **GRANTED**;

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that pursuant to an informal service agreement between the Wisconsin Department of Justice and this court, copies of the plaintiff’s complaint and this order are being electronically sent today to the Wisconsin Department of Justice for service on the state defendant;

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that, pursuant to the informal service agreement between the Wisconsin Department of Justice and this court, the defendant shall file a responsive pleading to the complaint within sixty (60) days of receiving electronic notice of this order;

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the agency having custody of the plaintiff shall collect from his institution trust account the balance of the filing fee by collecting monthly payments from the plaintiff's prison trust account in an amount equal to 20% of the preceding month's income credited to the plaintiff's trust account and forwarding payments to the Clerk of Court each time the amount in the account exceeds \$10 in accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The payments shall be clearly identified by the case name and number assigned to this action. If the plaintiff is transferred to another institution, county, state, or federal, the transferring institution shall forward a copy of this Order along with plaintiff's remaining balance to the receiving institution;

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that a copy of this order be sent to the officer in charge of the agency where the plaintiff is confined; and

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that, pursuant to the Prisoner E-Filing Program, Plaintiff shall submit all correspondence and case filings to institution staff, who will scan and e-mail documents to the Court. If Plaintiff is no longer incarcerated at a Prisoner E-Filing institution, he will be required to submit all correspondence and legal material to:

Office of the Clerk  
United States District Court  
Eastern District of Wisconsin  
362 United States Courthouse  
517 E. Wisconsin Avenue  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

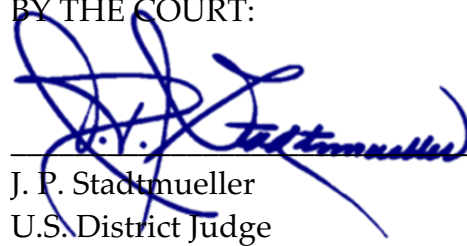
PLEASE DO NOT MAIL ANYTHING DIRECTLY TO THE COURT'S CHAMBERS. It will only delay the processing of the matter.

Plaintiff is further advised that failure to make a timely submission may result in the dismissal of this action for failure to prosecute. In

addition, the parties must notify the Clerk of Court of any change of address. Failure to do so could result in orders or other information not being timely delivered, thus affecting the legal rights of the parties.

Dated at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this 20th day of December, 2018.

BY THE COURT:



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J. P. Stadtmueller  
U.S. District Judge